

CLAIMS

We claim:

1 1. An e-mail communication method comprising the steps of:
2 inserting in an e-mail message a voice communications identifier;
3 transmitting said e-mail message to a recipient; and,
4 responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications identifier,
5 establishing a voice communications link with said recipient.

1 2. The e-mail communication method of claim 1, wherein said inserting step further
2 comprises the step of inserting in said e-mail message a selectable symbol denoting
3 voice communications availability.

1 3. The e-mail communication method of claim 1, wherein said inserting step further
2 comprises the step of:
3 inserting in said e-mail message a reference to a sender of said e-mail message;
4 and,
5 embedding computer program code in said e-mail message, wherein said
6 computer program code is configured to establish a voice communications link with said
7 sender.

1 4. The e-mail communication method of claim 3, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a
4 voice communications link with said sender.

1 5. The e-mail communication method of claim 3, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the steps of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, determining a link address for said sender based on said reference, and
4 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice
5 communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1 6. The e-mail communication method of claim 5, wherein said link address is a
2 telephone number.

1 7. The e-mail communication method of claim 5, wherein said link address is an IP
2 address.

1 8. The e-mail communication method of claim 1, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said
4 recipient.

1 9. The e-mail communication method of claim 1, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient
4 over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1 10. An e-mail communication method comprising the steps of:
2 detecting a voice communications identifier in an e-mail message transmitted by
3 a sender;
4 responsive to detecting said voice communications identifier, displaying a
5 selectable icon; and,
6 responsive to a selection of said icon, establishing a voice communications link
7 with said sender.

1 11. The e-mail communication method of claim 10, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the steps of:
3 extracting from said e-mail message embedded computer program code
4 configured to establish a voice communications link with said sender; and,
5 responsive to said selection of said icon, executing said embedded computer
6 program code in order to establish a voice communications link with said sender.

1 12. The e-mail communication method of claim 11, further comprising the step of
2 extracting an embedded reference to said sender from said e-mail message.

1 13. The e-mail communication method of claim 12, wherein said executing step
2 further comprises the steps of:

3 determining a link address for said sender based on said extracted reference;
4 and,

5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice
6 communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1 14. The e-mail communication method of claim 13, wherein said link address is a
2 telephone number.

1 15. The e-mail communication method of claim 13, wherein said link address is an
2 IP address.

1 16. The e-mail communication method of claim 10, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said
4 recipient.

1 17. The e-mail communication method of claim 10, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient
4 over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1 18. The e-mail communications method of claim 11, further comprising the steps of:
2 extracting from said e-mail message embedded references to said sender and at
3 least one other recipient of said e-mail message; and,
4 displaying a corresponding selectable icon for each of said at least one other
5 recipients.

1 19. The e-mail communication method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:
2 responsive to a selection of one of said selectable icons, identifying a
3 corresponding recipient and determining a link address for said corresponding recipient
4 based on said extracted reference; and,
5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice
6 communications link with said corresponding recipient according to said determined link
7 address.

1 20. The e-mail communication method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:
2 responsive to a selection of two or more of said selectable icons, identifying a
3 corresponding recipient for each selected icon and determining a link address for said
4 corresponding recipients based on said extracted references; and,
5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a
6 conference call with said corresponding recipients according to said determined link
7 addresses.

1 21. A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having a
2 plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform
3 the steps of:

4 inserting in an e-mail message a voice communications identifier;

5 transmitting said e-mail message to a recipient; and,

6 responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications identifier,

7 establishing a voice communications link with said recipient.

1 22. The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said inserting step further
2 comprises the step of inserting in said e-mail message a selectable symbol denoting
3 voice communications availability.

1 23. The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said inserting step further
2 comprises the step of:

3 inserting in said e-mail message a reference to a sender of said e-mail message;

4 and,

5 embedding computer program code in said e-mail message, wherein said

6 computer program code is configured to establish a voice communications link with said
7 sender.

1 24. The machine readable storage of claim 23, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a
4 voice communications link with said sender.

1 25. The machine readable storage of claim 23, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the steps of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, determining a link address for said sender based on said reference, and
4 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice
5 communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1 26. The machine readable storage of claim 25, wherein said link address is a
2 telephone number.

1 27. The machine readable storage of claim 25, wherein said link address is an IP
2 address.

1 28. The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said
4 recipient.

1 29. The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient
4 over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1 30. An machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having
2 a plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to
3 perform the steps of:

4 detecting a voice communications identifier in an e-mail message transmitted by
5 a sender;

6 responsive to detecting said voice communications identifier, displaying a
7 selectable icon; and,

8 responsive to a selection of said icon, establishing a voice communications link
9 with said sender.

1 31. The machine readable storage of claim 30, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the steps of:

3 extracting from said e-mail message embedded computer program code
4 configured to establish a voice communications link with said sender; and,

5 responsive to said selection of said icon, executing said embedded computer
6 program code in order to establish a voice communications link with said sender.

1 32. The machine readable storage of claim 31, further comprising the step of
2 extracting an embedded reference to said sender from said e-mail message.

1 33. The machine readable storage of claim 32, wherein said executing step further
2 comprises the steps of:

3 determining a link address for said sender based on said extracted reference;

4 and,

5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice
6 communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1 34. The machine readable storage of claim 33, wherein said link address is a
2 telephone number.

1 35. The machine readable storage of claim 33, wherein said link address is an IP
2 address.

1 36. The machine readable storage of claim 30, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said
4 recipient.

1 37. The machine readable storage of claim 30, wherein said establishing step
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications
3 identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient
4 over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1 38. The e-mail communications method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of:
2 extracting from said e-mail message embedded references to said sender and at
3 least one other recipient of said e-mail message; and,
4 displaying a corresponding selectable icon for each of said at least one other
5 recipients.

1 39. The machine readable storage of claim 38, further comprising the steps of:
2 responsive to a selection of one of said selectable icons, identifying a
3 corresponding recipient and determining a link address for said corresponding recipient
4 based on said extracted reference; and,
5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice
6 communications link with said corresponding recipient according to said determined link
7 address.

1 40. The machine readable storage of claim 38, further comprising the steps of:
2 responsive to a selection of two or more of said selectable icons, identifying a
3 corresponding recipient for each selected icon and determining a link address for said
4 corresponding recipients based on said extracted references; and,
5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a
6 conference call with said corresponding recipients according to said determined link
7 addresses.

1 41. An electronic message article of manufacture for use in a computer
2 communications network comprising:
3 a message header component encapsulating a reference to at least one of a
4 sending node in the network and a recipient node in the network;
5 a text message component encapsulating message text which can be extracted
6 from the electronic message and displayed in a message client; and,
7 an executable voice communications link program component configured to
8 establish a voice communications link between said sending and recipient nodes.

1 42. The electronic message article of manufacture of claim 41, wherein said voice
2 communications link is a Voice over IP (VoIP) based communications link.

1 43. The electronic message article of manufacture of claim 42, wherein said voice
2 communications link is a telephony-based link

1 44. An e-mail client comprising:

2 a conventional e-mail processor, said conventional e-mail processor extracting
3 and displaying message text encapsulated in a received e-mail; and,

4 a voice conversation processor, said voice conversation processor identifying a
5 voice communications link identifier encapsulated in said received e-mail, displaying a
6 selectable icon in response to detecting said voice communications link identifier and,
7 responsive to a selection of said selectable icon, establishing a voice communications
8 link with a sender of said received e-mail.

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